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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 001696

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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KMDR](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: WEEKLY NEPAL MEDIA REPORT FROM AUGUST 17 TO 23, 2004

STATE FOR NP, AC, PM

STATE FOR IN/R/MR

STATE FOR SA/INS, PM/CBM, PM/PRO

STATE FOR SA/PPD

#### [1. MAOIST BLOCKADE](#)

-- RNA providing air cover: The Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) is to provide air cover as security for vehicles entering and leaving Kathmandu in an attempt to break the Maoist blockade of Kathmandu Valley. (Centrist "The Kathmandu Post," E/D, 8/23)

-- Int'l media spreading rumors: Minister for Information and Communications Dr. Mohammed Mohsin has alleged the international media of spreading rumor. Dr. Mohsin, who is also the spokesman of the government, said that the government had been taken aback by the way international media were giving news that could result into panic. "There is no truth in news reports that say Kathmandu is under siege," he said. (Media reports, 8/23)

-- Valley isolated as blockade plugs main entry points: "The Maoists-imposed indefinite economic embargo on the capital has paralyzed life along the busy Prithvi Highway. The Valley has remained isolated and though the government may claim that things are picking up, statistics belie its claim. The country's busiest highway, where thousands of vehicles used to get stuck for hours due to traffic jams, was deserted." (Pro-India "The Himalayan Times," E/D, 8/22) . The Kathmandu Valley has been cut off from the rest of the country due to the indefinite highway blockade since Wednesday called by Maoist-affiliated student organizations and trade unions. The ANNISU-R had called for the blockade demanding the government to make public the whereabouts of missing student leaders, enquiry into the deaths of their leaders and compensation to the families of those killed by security forces. (Major reports, 8/19)

#### [2. MAOIST INSURGENCY](#)

-- Maoist attack Khalanga second time: The Maoists attacked Jumla Khalanga, the district headquarters of Jumla last night, killing one security personnel and abducting 14 persons - six government staffers, including chiefs of Revenue Office and Agriculture Development Office (ADO), six security personnel and two civilians. Rebels also torched five government offices and plundered two houses. Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) claimed four deaths on the rebel side. (Major reports, 8/23)

-- Maoists smuggling yarsagumba: Maoists are smuggling yarsagumba (*Cordyceps sinensis*), a pricey herb believed to be a cure for impotency and found in the country's western highlands, into India and Tibet on a massive scale, and levying duties on traders. (The Kathmandu Post, 8/23)

-- Companies unwilling to resume operation: Most companies that downed their shutters due to Maoist threats have rejected government appeals to resume operation, stating that they could not do so unless both the Maoists and the government reach an agreement to amicably put an end to the present crisis. (The Kathmandu Post, 8/22)

-- UN offers to mediate before it's too late: Assistant Secretary General of United Nations and Deputy Executive

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Director of UNICEF Kul Chandra Gautam has advised the government and Maoists to seek international assistance in resolving the present conflict before it deteriorates further. Gautam said UN Secretary General Kofi Anan could offer help to Nepal for establishing peace, if conflicting parties show their willingness. (The Kathmandu Post, 8/21)

-- UK adopting 'wait and watch' policy: British Special

Representative to Nepal Sir Jeffrey James Friday said the United Kingdom was adopting a "wait and watch" policy regarding whether to designate the Maoists a terrorist outfit. (Media reports, 8/21)

-- Maoists walked out from talks due to pressure from RIM: A year after the Maoists walked out from talks with the government, then Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa has said that the Maoists were under pressure from RIM. "RIM's analysis was that the Maoist movement, failed worldwide, was gaining new heights in Nepal. RIM suggested that the Maoists should go for 'fight to finish' and Maoists complied." (Centrist "Kantipur," V/D, 8/19)

-- Maoist threats prompt 11 industries to down shutters: Hotel Soaltee Crowne Plaza has shut down indefinitely following multiple bomb attacks by suspected Maoist rebels. About a dozen industries, including multinationals, are to down shutters from tomorrow (Tuesday) following threats from the Maoists' trade union wing. (Major reports, 8/17)

### 13. CURRENT AFFAIRS

-- Nepalis taken hostage in Iraq: A shadowy Islamist group has announced the purported seizure of 12 Nepali men for cooperating with U.S. forces in Iraq, according to a statement posted on an Islamist website Friday. (The Kathmandu Post and others picking up from AFP news, 8/21) On August 22, The Kathmandu Post reported: "The actual number of Nepali workers reportedly taken hostage by the Ansar al-Sunna Army, a militant outfit in Iraq, is 22, claimed Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies (NAFEA) President Nirmal Gurung. Meanwhile, the government formed a three-member probe committee to secure information on the abduction. The government does not allow citizens to work in Iraq due to security concerns but a large number of Nepalese workers have reportedly been channeled to war-torn country via India. (Major reports, 8/22)

-- Deuba to be declared incompetent again? Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba who came to power accepting every condition the king put forth is on his way to be declared incompetent again. The government's inability to provide security to industries, particularly Hotel Soaltee, which also has the king's investment, is leading to this. Deuba was sacked on October 4 last year on charges of "incompetence" by the king. (Pro-Nepali Congress "Rastriya Bimarsha," V/W, 8/20)

-- Maulana involved with international terrorist: Some Islam teachers, Maulana, arrested from separate places in Kathmandu six days back are suspected to have links with international terrorists. "They have a lot of accusations and we are investigating them. You please understand my hints and do not try to step forward in this case," Home Minister Purna Bahadur Khadka told a group of Muslims who had gone to inquire about the arrest. (Centrist "Rajdhani," V/D, 8/20)

### 14. JOURNALIST KILLED; MEDIA OUTRAGED

-- Journalists and professionals of various organizations staged protest demonstration in the capital Wednesday against Maoists' continuing activities of killing, abduction and issuing death threats to journalists in the recent days. Journalists took to the streets Wednesday protesting the Maoists' "atrocities against press freedom" following the killing of Dekendra Thapa, a journalist of Radio Nepal recently. (The top daily newspapers have all expressed outrage over the killing of Dekendra Thapa, Radio Nepal journalist. The Kathmandu Post and Kantipur published strong worded front-page editorials while the others have regular editorials.) (Major dailies, 8/19)

-- FNJ's letter to Prachanda: In an open letter addressed to Maoist Chairman Prachanda, Federation of Nepalese Journalists Wednesday, warned Maoists not to repeat crimes against journalists, and to respect the right to freedom of expression and their fundamental rights. Such anarchist, inhuman and violent actions would project them as enemies in the eyes of the journalists, the letter stated. "Let's hope the Maoists will correct their crimes and mistakes and exhibit political and humane behavior." (The Kathmandu Post, Kantipur, 8/19)

-- Maoists issue death threat to ten journalists: Following the assassination of journalist Dekendra Raj Thapa, the Maoists have issued death threats to ten more journalists. (The Kathmandu Post, 8/18)

-- Maoists kill journalist: Maoists have once again indulged in a gruesome murder of a journalist in

Dailekha district. Maoists abducted Dakendra Thapa, a journo working from Dailekh for Radio Nepal last week and killed him on August 11 on charges of spying. (Media reports, 8/17)

15. OTHERS

-- U.S. introduces biometric visa processing system: The U.S. Embassy in Nepal has introduced a new biometric visa processing system that requires electronic scanning of fingerprints for all non-immigrant and immigrant visa applicants with effect from July 15. (The Kathmandu Post, [www.kantipuronline.com](http://www.kantipuronline.com), 8/17)

-- Nepal-China agreements: China and Nepal signed four agreements on economic and technological cooperation and other areas in Beijing Monday afternoon. The documents include the Agreement on Economic and Technological Cooperation between the governments of the two countries, an agreement on Nepal's use of a road in Tibet to transport goods, an agreement on a bridge across the borders of the two countries and an agreement on automobile transportation. (Reports, 8/17)

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